

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5099

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As of January 22, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to the office of regulatory assistance.

**Brief Description:** Regarding the office of regulatory assistance.

**Sponsors:** Senator Rockefeller.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 1/22/07.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

**Background:** The Washington State Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA) was created in 2003 as an expansion of the Office of Permit Assistance. ORA helps answer permitting questions and provides access to information about state regulations. In addition, ORA assists with coordinating between the layers of state, local, and federal permit review.

ORA has two primary ways it delivers its services: a regulatory help desk assisting approximately 2,000 callers per year, and case managers located in regional offices who facilitate, coordinate, and help resolve disputes that can arise in permitting.

ORA is scheduled to terminate in 2007, pursuant to the Washington Sunset Act. As required by legislation, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) conducted a sunset review to assist policymakers with deciding whether ORA should be continued, modified, or terminated.

After completing their review, JLARC recommends that the Legislature repeal the existing sunset date and consider establishing a future sunset date and review. Additionally, JLARC recommends that ORA develop and implement a plan to demonstrate performance outcomes for the customers it serves and report to the Legislature on its performance and compliance with statutory duties.

**Summary of Bill:** The existing sunset date of June 30, 2008, is repealed and a new sunset date of June 30, 2012, is established.

An additional reporting requirement regarding negotiation and implementation of voluntary cost reimbursement agreements is added to existing reporting requirements. The first report is due on June 1, 2008, and biennially thereafter.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

JLARC must, by July 1, 2008, provide a status report to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature, on the compliance of ORA with the sunset review proposed final report dated January 4, 2007.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on June 1, 2007.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The feedback from the public regarding the efficiency and usefulness of ORA has been very positive. ORA has been an excellent resource for the public. The permitting process in Washington can be very time consuming, expensive, and frustrating. ORA is able to provide direction and assistance which allows the permitting process to be expedited and beneficial to all parties involved. ORA provides accountability for agencies that otherwise might not be so responsive. Successful coordination of multiple agencies is a team effort and extending the sunset for ORA is a step in the right direction.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Phil Rockefeller, prime sponsor; Chris McCabe, Association of Washington Business; Faith Lumsden, Office of Regulatory Assistance; Jerry Smedes, Northwest Environmental Business Council; Greg Hueckel, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Todd Ellis, Imperium Renewable; Jon Boyce, Anchor Environmental; Scott Boettcher, Department of Ecology.